

558

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

20 November 1975

The Honorable Frank Church, Chairman
Select Committee to Study Governmental
Operations With Respect to Intelligence
Activities

United States Senate
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In view of the President's decision that this Agency should not participate in public hearings on covert action in Chile, I am unable to accept your invitation to appear as a witness on the morning of 4 December 1975.

We continue to believe that public discussions of specific covert activities in any given country are not in the best interests of American national security. Moreover, they could create a risk of potential harm to individuals and other entities thus exposed. Although I understand your concern for protecting sensitive sources and methods and your desire to concentrate on the issue of control and management, the very nature of covert action precludes, in my opinion, public discussion.

We remain quite willing to discuss specific covert action programs in executive session, with the proviso that such testimony will remain classified. We have already done so in the past and will continue to do so in the future.

As far as my position with regard to public testimony of former or present Agency employees, it remains as stated both in communications with the Committee and in my recent letters to Ambassador Korry and Mr. David Phillips.

Declassified and
Approved for Release
July 2000

John E. McCollum
Director

